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41CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
INFORMATION REPORT

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Psychological Vulnerabilities**Individual Attitudes**

1. [] for fifteen years, from 1939 until the present, the Polish people had been living a life at the level of bare existence. World War II shortages, military oppression, combat action on Polish soil, occupation by foreign armies, and economic shortcomings had deprived the populace of their most vital basic needs, i.e., food, shelter, clothing, and employment. However, the desire for freedom, both personal and political, could be considered the most driving desire throughout the entire nation.
2. The Polish people did not consider themselves free. They considered themselves to be encircled by hated nationalities and oppressed by distasteful political influences. Stringent governmental decrees restricting personal expression, individual travel, and nationalistic feeling; forced economic, political, and military demands; and the

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25X1

- 2 -

withdrawal of all social, cultural, and independent contacts with the Western world had aroused a keen desire in the Polish people for a clean breakaway from the influence of the Soviet Union. The Polish people were afraid of war but still wished for it. Each spring they expected war in the fall; and in fall they expected war next spring. They felt that such a war would be "completed within a reasonably short period and that the conflict would take place in the Far Eastern world."

3. National hatred between the Poles and the Russians had increased since World War II. The Polish people still considered the Germans as their enemies; and, even if Western Germany were to become part of the Western military community, the Polish people would still distrust them in time of war even though they knew that the Western Germans were also fighting Communism.
4. "Real" freedom of religion did not exist in Poland. From year to year the Communists had been increasing their oppression of the Catholic church. Present maltreatment was being directed against the "bishop level" of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and against religious instruction in the schools. This oppression would increase in the future, progressing from the higher levels to the lower levels of the church. Most religious officials were under some form or another of Communist influence. Residents of larger communities did not feel the Communists' anti-religious attitude as much as those individuals who lived in the smaller rural areas. Therefore, religious attendance in the large cities was much greater proportionately than in rural communities although the city dwellers were probably not as sincerely devout. Only the greater conspicuousness of church attendance in rural areas explained the proportionately lower church attendance there. Most people desired to participate in the recognized church functions such as communion, marriage, funeral, and baptism ceremonies. Many refused to do so, however, for fear of the stigma that might be attached to them. The clergy was not free to influence the people via adequate sermons, personal guidance, and economic aid. No religious publications were available. Science, culture, and technology were so disassociated from religion that persons in these fields had to ignore their religious interests.
5. [redacted] the individual Pole had a strong desire to express himself freely. He would like to associate himself with persons with similar interests, to form cultural, social, and educational groups in which membership could be chosen voluntarily and which would not be used as a tool by a political party. Everyone craved contact with the peoples and countries outside the Soviet sphere of influence. Very important to all was the desire to select their own types and places of work and to solve their economic problems through their own efforts. Each one desired to formulate his own views on social, cultural, political, and economic conditions and to be able to learn the true opinions of his fellow man through a free press, radio, and other channels of communication. 25X1
6. In general, the people believed that they had had a better life prior to World War II. During World War II, when the people did not have enough to satisfy their basic needs, they lived on the hope that the war would end and that life would be better. It was very difficult, however, to estimate whether the satisfaction of basic needs improved or declined after Poland fell under Communist rule. The difference, if any, would have been qualitative and not quantitative.
7. After World War II the lot of the common person improved only in the sense that the physical elements of punishment for violation of military decrees, curfews, travel, etc. were obliterated. Oppression and

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- 3 -

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restrictions under wartime conditions [redacted]

[redacted] could not be compared. If any improvement took place after World War II, it was only minor. Organized living improved only to the extent that during World War II one lived from day to day and later one lived from month to month. There was no foreseeable improvement to be expected in the immediate future.

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Sources of Information

8. [redacted] Communist and state-controlled communications, personal experiences, and observation were the principal sources of information available to the Polish people. As far as the written word was concerned, only official governmental and party publications were available to the average individual, including foreign newspapers sponsored by the Communist Party. Radio and the press were the fundamental sources of regime information for the general populace. Neither the press nor the radio could be considered as free enterprises. The information which was provided by each did not mirror the true ideas and beliefs of the people. The ordinary public realized that what one read was either politically inspired or forced writing and what one heard was just a repetition of the usual Communist Party line.
9. Most of the radios, however, were individually controlled. Only in large state institutions like hospitals, department stores, amusement and cultural areas were the radios wired to a central set and the programs selected from specific stations. Conversations between family members in cafes, places of work, or other gatherings were restricted to general remarks about living conditions, sports, and ordinary gossip.

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Vital Political Issues

0. The most vital political issue in the minds of the Poles [redacted] concerned the present and future boundaries of Poland. Not only did they want to keep Szczecin (Stettin) and the areas formerly belonging to Germany, Upper Silesia, and East Prussia, but they also wanted the return of Wilno (Vilnius) and Iwov to Poland.

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Effectiveness of Western Propaganda

1. The Polish people were not forbidden by law to listen to Western radio broadcasts. The sincere desire for world-wide news, mistrust in Polish radio programming, and the hope to find a solution to their present problems had created a great interest in Western broadcasts among the Polish people. The Polish people only believed in what they heard on Polish or Soviet radio stations or read in the newspapers after the same information had been reported by Western broadcasting stations. Although Western radio programs did not openly encourage escape from Poland, they always "invited" escape.

Action Taken Against Discussion of Western Broadcasts

2. Although listening to Western broadcasts was not forbidden by law, the risk taken in discussing the information heard or letting others know that one did listen to such broadcasts was very great. Individuals brought before the civil courts for discussing the information heard were punished by imprisonment. The term of the prison sentence was usually determined by the political background and educational level of the individual concerned, the better educated receiving a longer sentence¹. In legal circles, popular speech, and open (regime) publications, the act of discussing Western broadcasts was usually labelled as "whispering propaganda."

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- 4 -

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Listeners to Western Broadcasts

3. [redacted] it was difficult to indicate how many of the population owned radios. [redacted] 50 per cent of the intellectuals, 40 per cent of urban families, and 20 per cent of the rural families owned radios, and that at least 50 per cent of these people did listen to Western radio broadcasts. [redacted] Communist Party members also listened to Western broadcasts [redacted]

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Reception of Western Broadcasts

4. [redacted]

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5.

6. [redacted] Radio Free Europe reception

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in the Pruszkow area. From 1900 to 2200 hours, [redacted] the programs [redacted] often very difficult to get clear reception. Most incoming programs had a tendency to fade. During the afternoon, the jamming of Radio Free Europe was at its greatest effectiveness. However, during the evening broadcasts [redacted] able to understand most of the programs in spite of the fading and jamming.

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7. [redacted] Radio Free Europe programs were truthful in content. When errors were noted, they were so insignificant that they in no way altered the content or validity of the news or commentary.

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[redacted] Once in a great while, a date or incident was reported to have happened during one time period when in actuality the event had taken place perhaps a few days previously. [redacted]

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[redacted] major error on Radio Free Europe. In 1951 it was reported over Radio Free Europe that Doctor Zera, a doctor of internal diseases and a heart specialist, had fled to the West. This was not true since [redacted]

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[redacted] the doctor and his family were still living in Warsaw.

8. Radio Free Europe broadcasts were very timely. In fact, the timeliness was so effective that the Polish people often wondered just how the West was able to receive the information in as short a period of time as they did.

9. The Polish people respected the aims of Radio Free Europe broadcasts and were often thankful that at no time did it request any action to

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- 5 -

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be taken by them. The broadcasts affected political and ideological beliefs among Polish people to the extent that they made convinced anti-Communists out of many persons who were previously only dissatisfied and made dissatisfied citizens out of those who had not previously expressed political opinions.

- D. The Polish government and Communist agencies tried to discredit these propaganda broadcasts, but did not try to discredit the broadcasts of world news or news commentaries. At least once a month, the Polish press would contain articles trying to discredit various Western programs.

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- E. The following are [] criticisms and suggestions on Western programs:

- a. All Radio Free Europe programs seemed to be directed toward the common people. Direct broadcasts from Munich appealed more to the people, first, because of the nearness of the transmitter and secondly because the speakers seemed to be more native to Poland than those heard via relay from New York. The manner of expression and personal appeal of the speakers speaking from Munich had a greater influence on the Polish people than those speakers who had spent considerable time outside of Poland. Radio Free Europe commentaries on Polish living conditions were very accurate.
- b. The BBC often read or translated a newspaper editorial and then made no comment upon it, leaving the problem in the hands of the listener for solution or thought. Radio Free Europe only referred to an editorial by title and then made its own comments thereon, leaving little for the individual listener to think through on his own. [] if Radio Free Europe was to continue along this line, it should at least identify and read an editorial before adding its own comments.
- c. News programs were too few and too short. At least two 15-minute news programs should be given daily, in which general world-wide events should be covered.
- d. []
- e. If the Western nations desired to plant any specific idea in the minds of the Poles, they should present their idea through a series of messages over an extended period of time and repeat the messages in as many different ways as possible.

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Anti-Communist Leaflets

[] only one anti-Communist leaflet. In 1953, Cardinal Wyszyński wrote a church letter, a private communication, in which he prepared himself for his expected imprisonment. In this letter, the church leader wrote that if there was to be a court trial the people should not believe what he said before the court since he would be forced to say things which would not be true. This letter was reproduced and distributed from hand to hand. [] Cardinal Wyszyński had not been imprisoned; but it was the belief of higher church officials that the Communists could not continue to make any headway in their anti-Catholic program unless the Cardinal, as leader of the Catholic church in Poland, were imprisoned, just as had taken place in Hungary. [] the letters must have been widely distributed, for it was the main subject of conversation throughout the country

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CONFIDENTIAL

- 6 -

25X1

until and for quite some time after the Cardinal's imprisonment. It undoubtedly helped to reunify the church and reestablish a stronger anti-Communist feeling among Church officials and followers.

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